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The Steven W. Atwood Library and Information Commons: Library Without Doors

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Mt. Laurel, N.J. The attachment of the Hills’ name to Penn’s School of Veterinary Medicine will exemplify the exceptional talent that the School produces for the world—individuals who are compassionate, innovative, entrepreneurial, successful and committed to improving the health and well-being of humans and animals alike. ▀

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The Steven W. Atwood Library and Information Commons got its name from a very special relationship between a veterinarian and his client—or, more precisely, because of a Penn Vet alumnus and a dog owner on a small island off Massachusetts. For many years, **Dr. Steven Atwood, V’80, M.D.**, had counted among his patients this woman’s dogs, from the early days when he had practiced on Nantucket Island and later when he settled on Martha’s Vineyard (she moved to the Vineyard just so her animals could continue to be treated by Dr. Atwood). When he approached the client about focusing her support and generosity to Penn Veterinary Medicine, the suggestion was enthusiastically received. A bequest of \$2 million to the School—the donor wished to remain anonymous—was the result, with the condition that the library in the new teaching and discovery center, the Vernon and Shirley Hill Pavilion, would be the namesake of her favorite veterinarian, Dr. Atwood.

“I would say we all have clients who are special. In some cases, we’re aware of their financial circumstances and their potential to help Penn,” said Dr. Atwood. “When you believe in something, it’s really not hard to convey that enthusiasm to a potential client/donor in a positive way—not only for the School, but for veterinary medicine, for animals, for biomedical research, for comparative medicine. It’s an easy sell. Alumni should not be bashful in broaching the subject of a large gift to a special client; it’s a cause eminently worth supporting.”



Ribbon-cutting at the dedication for the Steven W. Atwood Library and Information Commons, January 5, 2007. From left to right: Dean Emeritus Alan M. Kelly, Penn Vet librarian Barbara Cavanaugh, Vernon Hill, Shirley Hill with Duffy, Dr. Steven W. Atwood and Dean Joan C. Hendricks. Photo by John Donges.

The Steven W. Atwood Library and Information Commons on the Hill Pavilion’s second floor includes an electronic classroom with 16 workstations grouped along a U-shaped table. Here students and faculty can attend workshops for database searching and presentation and bibliographic software. With students and faculty congregating in the library’s lounge, it takes a moment to realize something is missing: Atwood may be the first “library without doors.” ▀